

SEED & BREAD

FOR THE SOWER ISA. 55: 10 FOR THE EATER
BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

Otis Q. Sellers, Bible Teacher

THE "NOT BEING" BUT "AS BEING" PRINCIPLE

Every statement in the Bible needs to be interpreted. We must make clear to ourselves the meaning of that which has been said. For example, in Matt, 1:1 we read: "**The book of the generation of Jesus Christ.**" The average reader probably feels at once that he knows what this means. However, if he meditates upon it he will probably say with Shakespeare: "Aye, that needs to be scanned."

These words are evidently a caption, but the question at once arises whether this heading is intended for the first seventeen verses or whether it deals with the entire Gospel. It is evident immediately that much depends on what the Greek word *genesis* means and what it includes. The more I think about it, the more I become engrossed with the idea that *genesis* here means essential nature, and that this caption fits the entire Gospel which deals in many places with the essential nature of Jesus Christ. This word is translated "nature" in its other two occurrences. See James 1:23 and 3:6.

By "nature" I mean His intrinsic character and quality, and the revelation of this begins in the opening words of Matthew. He is the son of David, the son of Abraham, and the rightful heir of the promise made to them. We are given the record of His peculiar birth, told that He was to be named *Yehousha* (Jehovah-Savior) and that He should be called Emmanuel, which being interpreted means "**God with us.**" So even as the caption fits the first chapter, it will also fit the entire Gospel, and thus we see that the very first statement of the New Testament demands interpretation if we would know the meaning of what it says.

As there is in all fields of study, there are principles in Bible interpretation that need to be scrupulously observed. Many of these need to be discovered and established by careful study and comparison, but there is one that is clearly enunciated by the Spirit of God. I, for one, would not want to grieve the Holy Spirit by ignoring a matter that He has distinctly affirmed. Failure to recognize, admit, and abide by this principle could lead to many erroneous interpretations and the misuse of many passages of Scripture.

The principle of interpretation to which I refer is affirmed by Paul in Romans 4: 17 where he declares that God "**calls those things which be not as though they were.**" This is a divine statement concerning how God may act, and we can either be believers and admit that He does it, or be unbelievers and deny that He has ever so acted. It will be an act of faith upon our part if we accept the stated fact that He has spoken in His Word of those things that do not exist as though they existed. We must ever be on the lookout for cases of this principle in action. God does speak of things future and uses the present tense in so doing. If we take statements such as these and make them to be true now, we may discredit the truthfulness of God and impugn His Word.

This principle becomes more clear when we consider the situation that brought forth its declaration by the Apostle. Almost two thousand years before Paul's day God spoke of Abraham's descendants (seed), said that He had made him the father of many nations, said this at a time when Abraham was childless, and all expectation of him having children was gone (Rom. 4:19). He spoke of Abraham's descendants as if they were then in existence, thus speaking of something that was not then true as if it were true. This led Paul to remind us that there are times when God "speaks of those things that be not as though they were." At all times when this principle is in operation there will be something in the context that will establish it as being the literary method that is being used. This is found often in the poetical books of the Bible, so to them we will turn for specific examples.

In Psalm 10:16 we read: "**The LORD is King for ever and ever; the heathen are perished out of His land.**" In the Hebrew this reads: "Jehovah is King for the eon and beyond; the nations are vanished out of His land." It is passages such as this that lead many to say that Jehovah is King today, and that He is governing the earth and the people upon it. However, the plain facts are that He is not. A king governs, he rules, he administers justice. If Jehovah is King today, then He is inactive. He is dispensing grace which is the very opposite of justice. This passage is a classic example of God speaking of things that are not as if they were. The safeguard against misunderstanding is found in the words, "**the nations have vanished out of His land,**" One would have to be impervious to the obvious facts who would insist that this is true today. Other nations are very much in the land that God promised to Israel.

Another clear example of this principle is found in Psalm 93: 1. Here we are told: "**The LORD reigneth, He is clothed with majesty; the LORD is clothed with strength, wherewith He hath girded Himself; the world also is established, that it cannot be moved.**" This should read "Jehovah hath become King," as Rotherham faithfully translates it. Delitzsch understands the Hebrew to say there: "Jehovah is now King;" and Kirkpatrick renders it "Jehovah has proclaimed Himself King." Rotherham further says this: "tells of nothing less than an especial assumption of sovereignty by Jehovah Himself."

Maclaren says: "These words describe an act rather than a state," and that He has "become King by some specific manifestation of His sovereignty." These words are good and true, but it needs to be noted that here God is speaking of things not being as if they were a reality. Jehovah has not yet become King, He is not now King, He has not yet assumed sovereignty, neither has there been any specific act upon His part that has made His sovereignty manifest throughout the earth. All these things will yet be true, but they are not true now. In this Psalm God speaks of the future in the present tense.

The words: "He is clothed in majesty," should read, "**In majesty hath He clothed Himself.**" His coronation will be by His own hands. Men will not array Him in royal robes. The gaudy trappings of men will not suffice for Him. He will clothe Himself in majesty, that manifest quality that inspires awe and reverence. Men cannot make Him King, even if every man on earth agreed to do so. And the proof that God is here speaking of the future as if it were a present reality is seen in the declaration, "**He has founded the world, it shall not be shaken.**" A more accurate translation here would tell us, "He has firmly established the world, it cannot be shaken."

The world in which we live is not firmly established, and it will not be until the time comes for "**the manifestation of the sons of God**" (Rom. 8:18-22). "**The whole creation groans and travails in pain together**" (Rom. 8:22). Man's habitation is constantly shaken by earthquakes, wars, floods, famines, pestilences, and the presence of the sin factor that entered into it by Adam's transgression. But this will not always be, for the most important accomplishment of the kingdom of God will be an established, fixed order that cannot be shaken (Heb. 12:26-28).

This truth is strengthened by the promise given in Psalm 96:10. "**Say among the nations that Jehovah has become King. Surely He has established the world that it shall not be moved. He shall judge the people righteously.**"

We who believe in God surely wish very much that this could be said today. We would be happy indeed if the properly commissioned heralds could go forth by divine appointment and declare of a truth that Jehovah has assumed sovereignty, that He has become King. We would rejoice if the proper man could stand in the United Nations and proclaim this as operating fact; that others could stand before congresses, parliaments, senates, and all other legislative bodies and announce this for a fact. I would suggest Paul, David, or the twelve apostles for this work. "But these are all dead," someone is sure to say. However, do not worry, they will all be alive when God assumes sovereignty. The gates of hades will never prevail over those who make up his ekklesia; all who have a position out of Him.

As we look upon the chaos that is in the world today, how could anyone say, "He has established the world that it shall not be moved" or that "He is judging the people righteously." Impossible! In these passages we find God declaring things that will be as if they were true today. Paul declares that He does this, and if it is not done in these passages, then where in God's Word is it done.

Consider further the divine declarations in Psalms 97:1, 3, 6. **"Jehovah has become King, let the earth rejoice, let the multitude of the coastlands rejoice. . . A fire goeth before Him and burns up His enemies. His lightnings illumined the world; the earth sees and trembles. . . The heavens declare His righteousness, and all the peoples see His glory."** Most certainly our God is here speaking of things that are not as if they were.

As a final example we will consider Psalm 98:1-3. In this beautiful passage we are asked to: **"Sing to Jehovah a song that is new, for He has done marvelous things: His own right hand and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory. Jehovah hath made known His victory, He has unveiled His righteousness to the eyes of the nations. He hath remembered His kindness and His faithfulness to the house of Israel, all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God."**

It will be seen from all the examples cited that the "not being" but "as being" principle has its strongest application in those passages which seems to declare the present sovereignty of Jehovah over the nations. And it is these passages that are constantly cited as positive proof that Jesus Christ is now King. Those who contend for this fail to see that if He is King then He is not acting like one. **"He who rules over men must be just"** (2 Sam. 23:3). And one of the most obvious facts at present is that there is very little if any justice in this world today. How can it be then that some say we are living under the rule of Jehovah?

End Issue No. SB121